

On the 22nd December one young had hatched. On the 23rd there were two young in the nest, the cuckoo dark skinned and the thrush pink, but on the 24th a cuckoo nestling was the only occupant. On 31st December it became feathered and the orange mouth was noticed, as were the striped breast and spots on the wings and tail. On 20th January it was fully plumaged, with tail growing larger and some signs of red on upper breast. It was later identified as the Red-chested Cuckoo,

On the 1st January it was removed from the nest and was hand fed on a diet of worms and moths. The cuckoo fluttered to the ground on the 15th day from hatching, but was never heard to make the 'Piet-my-Vrou' call, only feeding noises. It started to feed itself on the 20th day, when it could fly strongly, but it flew a little from the 17th day. It was ringed (with a Pretoria Zoo number C.662).

According to Liversidge, *Ostrich* XXVI (1), Feb. 1955, the nestling period of *C. solitarius* is 20 days  $\pm$  6 hours. In the Revised *Roberts' Birds of South Africa*, 1959, the nestling period is given as 17½ to 20 days, which this record also confirms.

Cooke's son taught the cuckoo to fly by making it exercise its wings whilst it was on his hand.

## Greater Black-backed Gull with massive infestation of a parasitic worm

by BRYAN L. SAGE AND T. R. LAWSON

*Received 2nd November, 1960*

On 19th March 1960, a first-winter Greater Black-backed Gull, *Larus marinus* Linnaeus, was found freshly dead at the King George V Reservoir, Lee Valley, Essex. There was no external evidence of injury to account for the death of the bird, and at post-mortem examination the only abnormal findings were within the abdominal cavity.

The abdominal organs and the anterior abdominal wall were covered with extensive deposits of fat. The peritoneal cavity contained a small quantity of blood-stained fluid. An abscess, about 4 centimetres in diameter, walled off by loops of inflamed intestine, was present on the right side under the liver, and contained blood-stained pus with large numbers of a strigeid (trematode) worm subsequently identified as *Cotylurus platycephalus* (Creplin 1825). In several places the abscess cavity was in direct communication with the lumen of the surrounding gut. The oesophagus was normal, and the stomach, which contained a small quantity of bile-stained fluid, was also normal. The intestinal loops in the vicinity of the abscess were inflamed and *Cotylurus platycephalus* was adherent in large numbers to the mucosal wall from the duodenum to the recto-intestinal junction, with a maximal concentration in the terminal 15 centimetres of the intestine. The intestine, when opened, presented a somewhat similar appearance to that shown in the plate illustrating the paper by Soulsby and Harrison, to which we refer below. The rectum itself was free from infestation.

The bird was a female, with a single ovary measuring approximately 1.3 x 0.4 centimetres. The cause of death was ascribed to peritonitis from an intra-abdominal abscess and enteritis secondary to massive infestation with *Cotylurus platycephalus*.

## DISCUSSION

According to Szidat (1929) Strigeids feed at the expense of their hosts, partly on blood and partly on the altered tissue of the mucous membrane, to which they attach themselves by means of the powerful sucking and clinging apparatus situated on the anterior portion of the body. The breakdown of the cellular structure of the mucosa is apparently caused by a secretion from certain glands in the clinging organs of the worm. This trematode was originally found by Creplin in the bursa of Fabricius of the Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellatus* (Pontoppidan). Its life history is still imperfectly known, but it seems highly probable that the sequence of hosts is mollusc—fish (probably freshwater species only)—fish-eating bird.

As may be expected *Cotylurus platycephalus* has been found in a wide variety of fish-eating birds, and it has been recorded previously from the Greater Black-backed Gull by Mühling (1898). A recent case in a Herring Gull, *Larus argentatus* Pontoppidan, found on the Isle of Sheppey, Kent, in June 1957 has been described by Soulsby and Harrison (1958). This bird had a large fusiform distension in the upper part of the large intestine, and death was due to acute obstruction. In the present case there was no sign of intestinal obstruction at post mortem. The most remarkable occurrence of this parasite so far reported in the British Isles appears to be that described by Baylis and Lowe (1934) from Littleton Reservoir, Staines, Middlesex, where the death of a large number of Razorbills, *Alca torda* Linnaeus, was found to be due to this cause.

In addition to the species already mentioned other recorded hosts include Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* (Linnaeus); Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax carbo* (Linnaeus); White-tailed Eagle, *Haliaeetus albicilla* (Linnaeus); Arctic Skua, *Stercorarius parasiticus* (Linnaeus); Pomatorhine Skua, *Stercorarius pomarinus* (Temminck); Long-tailed Skua, *Stercorarius longicaudus* Vieillot; Lesser Black-backed Gull, *Larus fuscus* Linnaeus; Common Gull, *Larus canus* Linnaeus; Black-headed Gull, *Larus ridibundus* Linnaeus; Kittiwake, *Rissa tridactyla* (Linnaeus); Common Tern, *Sterna hirundo* Linnaeus; Crested Tern, *Sterna bengalensis* Lesson; and Black Guillemot, *Uria grylle* (Linnaeus).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are indebted to Mr. Stephen Prudhoe of the Department of Zoology, British Museum (Natural History) for identifying *Cotylurus platycephalus* and for drawing our attention to references in the literature.

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